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Howard Hughes

From Tribune Wire Services

AS VEGAS, Nev., Dec. 27—Elusive billionaire Howard ies was indicted by a federal grand jury today in connec- with his takeover of Air West Airlines.

Hughes was charged with fraud, conspiracy, stock manip- on, and other crimes in his 1969 takeover of the regional e.

t was the first time criminal charges had been brought ıst him, despite numerous investigations of his financial :e.

IIS FORMER TOP aide and three other associates also named defendants in the nine-count indictment returned ederal District Court here. The indictment accused the of conspiring to depress the market price of Air West stock in a roundabout scheme to pressure Air West directors to agree to the Hughes takeover.

Hughes last week reportedly left his hideout in England for the Bahamas where his is said to have taken over the top two floors of Freeport's Xanadu Princess Hotel, a casino resort.

A spokesman for Hughes in Los Angeles said "until we have an opportunity to read what we're accused of, we can't have anything to say about it."

A SPOKESMAN for the Justice Department said attorneys are studying whether Hughes can be extradited to face the charges.

Indicted along with the industrialist were: Robert Maheu, former chief executive officer of the Hughes' Nevada operations; Chester C. Davis, chief legal counsel for the corporation; David B. Charnay, a Hughes associate and president of Four Star International, a TV and movie production firm; and James H. Hall, who is in charge of land acquisition for Hughes' Nevada operations.

Hughes, who has not been seen in public for years, is reportedly in the Bahamas.

The indictment said the alleged conspiracy took place between June, 1968, and January, 1969. Hughes bought the airline in December, 1968.

THE INDICTMENT said Charnay and two unindicted coconspirators sold a total of 46,000 shares of Air West stock during a two-day period in December, 1968.

Hughes, Maheu, and Davis caused lawsuits to be filed

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indicted

against Air West directors who had voted against selling out to Hughes' company, the Hughes Tool Co., the indictment said.

Hughes and his associates then used the lawsuits to pressure the recalcitrant directors into changing their votes, the indictment said.

Named as coconspirators but not indicted were Herman Greenspun, editor and publisher of the Las Vegas Sun, who has been involved with Hughes in numerous financial dealing, and George Crocket, former owner of Alamo Airways and a long-time friend of Hughes.

HE AND THE other defendants if convicted could be sentenced to a maximum of five years in prison and fined $10,000 on the conspiracy charge. The other charges carry lesser penalties.